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SOLDIER ALIENATION: A MEASUREABLE CONCEPT?

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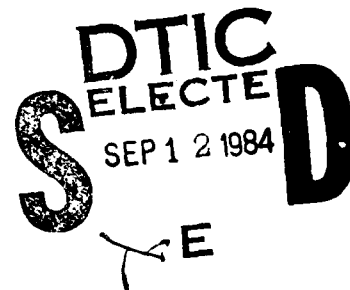MANPOWER AND PERSONNEL RESEARCH LABORATORY

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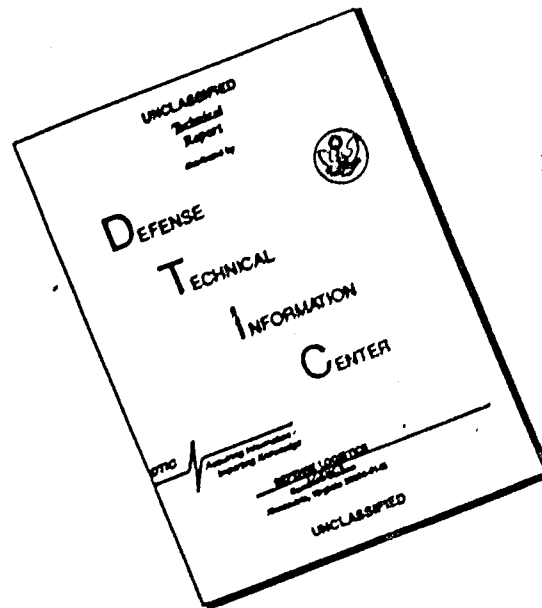
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Wesbrook (1980) proposed and tested the hypothesis that there is a negative correlation between sociopolitical alienation (estrangement, separation from society) and the military efficiency of the junior enlisted soldier. Alienation was measured with a 41-item questionnaire and military efficiency with commander ratings of soldiers' job performance and reliability. Results supported the hypothesis. Implications of the findings as discussed by Wesbrook include the following: (1) improvements

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in organizational climate factors such as leadership, instruction, incentives, and working conditions are not apt to reduce markedly the number of ineffective soldiers in the Army: (2) reducing the level of alienation in society as a whole is the ultimate solution to the problem of large numbers of ineffective soldiers in today's Army; and (3) drawing a more representative sample of citizens for the Army (rather than recruiting from what have traditionally been the most alienated elements of society) would provide a more immediate solution. *The author of the present study concludes.*

Because of the major policy implications of Wesbrook's findings, his study was examined in the present report within the following framework: (1) methodological standards by which to judge currently available questionnaire measures of alienation, (2) current state of the art of alienation measurement, (3) evidence that alienation is a meaningful concept as applied to the Army, (4) examination of Wesbrook's methodology, and (5) directions for future alienation research.

The thesis developed in the report is that, although alienation is a meaningful concept as applied to the Army, levels of alienation cannot, with currently available questionnaire instruments, be meaningfully measured in the Army.

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SOLDIER ALIENATION: A MEASUREABLE CONCEPT?

BRIEF·
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Requirement:

Research results indicating that sociopolitical alienation and military
efficiency of junior enlisted soldiers are negatively correlated led ODCSPER to
identify the following near-term human research issue: What is the potential
impact, if any, of soldier alienation on the ability of units to deploy rapidly
and fight effectively? Requirement was to determine if a research effort could
provide near-term answers.

Procedure:

Theoretical and research literatures on alienation were examined, with
special emphasis on problems of definition and measurement. The adequacy of an
alienation measure used in previous research which was reported to have
a negative correlation with military efficiency (Wesbrook, 1980) was critiqued.

Findings:

Critical examination of literature indicates that although alienation is a
meaningful concept as applied to the Army, levels of alienation cannot, with
currently available questionnaire instruments, be meaningfully measured in the
Army.

Utilization of Findings:

Army efforts to answer the near-term human research issue (identified under
Requirement) -- which depended upon availability of an adequate questionnaire
measure of alienation -- were discontinued.

Discussion of complexity involved in conceptualizing and measuring soldier
alienation provide guidance and directions for future research on alienation.

SOLDIER ALIENATION: A MEASUREABLE CONCEPT?

CONTENTS

SOLDIER ALIENATION: A MEASUREABLE CONCEPT?

INTRODUCTION

The recent work of Major Stephen D. Wesbrook on sociopolitical alienation and its negative impact on military efficiency raises a number of important policy issues for the volunteer Army. Major Wesbrook's argument, as reported in Armed Forces and Society (1980), is summarized in the following quotes:

> There are two general explanations for a military organization possessing a large number of ineffective soldiers when the traditional measures of quality indicate that it should not. The first explanation is that the military organization has failed to provide the proper organizational climate, which includes such factors as leadership, instruction, incentives, and working conditions. The second is that the quality of the individuals entering the organization is not as high as the traditional measures would indicate. Such an unrecognized degradation in quality could result from the widespread presence of characteristics that limit the individual's ability to become an effective soldier but that have not been identified and consequently are not being controlled or combated (p. 171).
>
> The results contained in this section clearly support the major hypothesis of this study, that there is a negative correlation between sociopolitical alienation and the military efficiency of the junior enlisted soldier. Sociopolitical alienation does appear to limit seriously the Army's ability to produce efficient soldiers. A high degree of alienation almost ensures that the soldier will possess low morale, proficiency, and discipline (p. 185).
>
> The ultimate solution to the problem would be to reduce the level of alienation in society as a whole. However, in the near term this is unlikely to happen. In fact, a general and steady growth of sociopolitical alienation in society has been well documented.
>
> A more immediate solution would be to draw a more representative sample of the American population into the Army. As long as the Army is forced to recruit from which have traditionally been the most alienated elements of society, the alienation problem will not go away. If a substantial portion of the most capable and well-integrated members of society continue to refuse to serve in the Army, the alienation drain on military efficiency will probably exist to some degree regardless of the internal efforts of the Army to combat it. (p. 187).

Specifically, Major Wesbrook defines alienation as a condition of estrangement or separation. He believes three dimensions of alienation are particularly relevant to military efficiency: (1) meaninglessness ("The individual lacks a clear set of values; that is, he is unsure of what he ought to believe"); (2) isolation ("the values and beliefs held by the individual differ from those that are commonly held by most of society"); and (3) cynicism or mistrust (trust is "a set of beliefs which reflects confidence that what is occuring or is going to occur, even if it is not fully understood, is right and proper.") Major Wesbrook's questionnaire measure of the three dimensions of alienation is based on 41 Likert-type questions "gleaned from the author's experience as a company commander and from the social science literature dealing with alienation."

Due to the potential importance of this problem, the present authors examined Wesbrook's work, became familiar with the social science literature on alienation, and administered Wesbrook's questionnaire (along with other items to assess its construct validity) to approximately 300 soldiers. The questionnaire data will be discussed in a subsequent report. In this paper we addressed ourselves to questions about the measurement and meaning of alienation from the perspective of contemporary social science, particularly psychology. The resultant thesis is that although alienation is a meaningful concept as applied to the Army, levels of alienation cannot, with currently available questionnaire instruments, be meaningfully measured in the Army. Our intent is to provide a guide for the social scientist to the current research literature on alienation and to suggest next-step research efforts having relevance to Army problems.

This report is organized into five sections. First, the standards used to determine if currently available measures of alienation are adequate are

described. Second, conclusions from the research literature about the current
state-of-the-art of alienation measurement are presented. Third, potential
rationales for judging that alienation is a meaningful concept as applied to the
Army are discussed. Fourth, Wesbrook's (1980) research is reviewed with an
emphasis on evaluating the methodology central to his work. Finally, several
directions for future alienation research of relevance to the Army are
suggested.

STANDARDS USED TO JUDGE METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ADEQUACY OF CURRENTLY AVAILABLE MEASURES

The determination of what are the most appropriate standards to use to
evaluate the adequacy of available measures of alienation within the context of
the current situation in the Army is quite complex. There are several reasons
for this. First, alienation, as has been repeatedly noted, is an ambiguous
concept with regard to its general empirical referents. Second, it is
frequently unclear when researchers are conceptualizing it as a unique
psychological phenomenon or when they are utilizing the term as a composite
measure of several previously articulated constructs. Third, the task of
measuring alienation in the contemporary Army presents a number of
context-specific problems. The available measures, except those of Wesbrook
(1980), have not been designed with this situation in mind. Hence, there are a
myriad of potential "translation" problems if other alienation measures are
adapted. Further, because of the nature and mission of the Army, the research
must put less emphasis on theory building and more on finding near-term answers
to important, pragmatic questions. Therefore, the most important criteria for
evaluation are probably reliability, validity, proportion of variance accounted

for, ease of measurement <u>within</u> the Army context, and amenability to policy intervention.

Since alienation, to be a useful construct, needs to be able to be measured consistently in different locations and at different times within the military setting, the measurement technique should have demonstrated test-retest reliability and be relatively insensitive to various potential administration artifacts. The measure should have both high concurrent and predictive validity. Thus, it should correlate, in the theoretically predicted way, with both temporally contiguous and future measures. Moreover, it should be shown that the concept indexes something unique and that different ways of measuring the construct yield the same answer. This can be done with, for example, the use of the multitrait, multimethod matrix (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Further, the measure should be shown to relate to other measures in the theoretically predicted manner, thus exhibiting construct validity.

Alienation, to be a useful concept in the Army context, must account for significant proportions of variance on the relevant criterion variables. Finally, alienation should be easily measured within the Army context. Elaborate measurement techniques or those that need to capitalize on idiosyncratic or rare situations would not be feasible.[1]

METHODOLOGICAL STATUS OF MEASURES OF ALIENATION USED IN THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

In our examination of the literature, we did not encounter a single paper which met the methodological standards described in the preceding section. Considering the number of research articles published, e.g., over 250 citations in Seeman's chapter (1975) titled "Alienation Studies" in the <u>Annual Review of</u>

Sociology, it may seem surprising that adequate measures do not exist. There are at least three factors which help explain the present state-of-the-art of alienation measurement. First, alienation is not the province of a single discipline; for example, Johnson's book (1973) on the meaning of alienation contains contributions by, among others, philosophers, psychiatrists, revolutionaries, and social accountants. From the perspective of disciplines other than psychology it is understandable that methodological benchmarks developed by and still closely associated with psychology are viewed as peripheral. Second, when analyzing the concept of alienation there is the metatheoretical view that psychology's emphasis on rigorous methodology, controlled laboratory experimentation, statistics, etc. is itself reflective of the alienation in society. As Seeman (1975) put it:

> None of this, of course, speaks to the argument (more prominent in recent years) that all of these research styles represent alienated methods--i.e., dehumanized and quantified ways of making objects out of persons, secularized in such a degree that one can contend that 'ours is a culture alienated in fact and in principle' (Roszak, 1973: 413; see also Kolakowkski, 1968; Krimsky, 1974) (p. 115).

Third, the term "alienation" has been used to cover such a broad conceptual area that, in the view of some writers the term would be best interred (e.g., Lee's article, 1972, 'An obituary for alienation'). Even those writers who are at the methodological and conceptual forefront of the topic pay homage to those who would discard the term and suggest that the phenomena might be better conceptualized within other theoretical frameworks. The following, from a philosopher and a psychologist respectively, are illustrative:

> henceforth, nobody should write about alienation without first reading Schacht's book. Others have had doubts whether the word had not been used so promiscuously that its usefulness had been seriously impaired. But what was needed was not a blanket resolve to abandon the term or to use it in a clearly specified way. What was needed was clarification (Kaufmann, 1970, p. xvi).

> Despite the negative findings reported here, it is our
> opinion that. because of the unresolved conceptual and
> methodological issues discussed, the interment of Work
> Alienation as an intrapsychic construct would be premature
> (Lefkowitz & Brigando, 1980. p. 129).

Clearly there are few, if any, measures which meet the standards described for a "meaningfully measured concept" discussed in an earlier section. Further, there are currently few conceptualizations of alienation amenable to rigorous operationalization and empirical verification. However, the concept(s) of alienation possess a high degree of relevance to social systems such as the Army. Seeman's (1975) position appears, to us, to be well-balanced:

> ...the cautions involved work both ways: the enthusiasts
> make alienation the master concept -- conveniently imprecise,
> empirically omnipresent, and morally irresistible when employed
> as critique· while the doubters, with equal convenience, forget
> that dismissing the word in no way eliminates our dependence
> upon the root ideas concerning personal control and
> comprehensible social structures which the alienation tradition
> embodies (p. 91). The perspective that (the broad tradition)
> provides is indispensable. Though a narrower focus
> characterizes the empirically oriented alienation st·· ; -, these
> studies nonetheless lay claim to a broad intellectual tradition
> which, comprehendingly or not, they develop, challenge, or alter
> (and, some would say, distort). (p. 92).

REVIEW OF WESBROOK'S (1980) RESEARCH

In order to respond to the results-oriented, policy-relevant issues central to the Army, we need to possess adequate context-appropriate measures of alienation. Our reading of the research literature indicates that none are currently available or will be available when needed. Since Wesbrook (1980) has already addressed, in some fashion, a number of these issues and in the process developed a 41-item questionnaire measuring alienation and several of its components, we critically scrutinized his research approach, methodology, findings, and interpretations.. The standards we applied in our critique were

rigorous because rigorous methodology is required to answer policy-relevant questions. The reader should be aware that based on the literature presented in this report, Wesbrook's (1980) article would have to represent a quantum jump in the state of research in order to adequately answer the questions. Unfortunately, Wesbrook's research is not able to answer the questions with an acceptable degree of scientific rigor. The published research, albeit provocative and sensitizing, can only provide a useful heuristic for a number of conceptual and methodological reasons.

Conceptually, the dimensions of alienation focused on by Wesbrook are interesting and plausibly relevant to the military setting. They are also related to individuals' functioning in most spheres of life. Hence, Wesbrook needs to empirically demonstrate that these dimensions help understand performance in the military. This, it turns out, is a very difficult task.

In exploratory research, it is appropriate to generate items to index a hypothesized construct utilizing relevant "experience" and the social science literature. However, it then is incumbent upon the research to validate the construct and the items measuring it. This Wesbrook has not done. First, we need to know the stability of the measures. This should have been done by obtaining a measure of test-retest reliability. Items which are not stable should be discarded. Next we need to know something of the construct validity of the proposed dimensions of alienation. A useful technique here would be factor analysis. If his conceptualization has validity, then the specific items should load highly on the appropriate dimensions. Further, the results should be cross-validated because of potential instability due to sample-specific effects. Perhaps another useful procedure to employ would be item discrimination (point biserial procedure) which could be used, for example, to indicate

how well each question discriminated between those soldiers who were rated by
commanders as reliable as opposed to those rated unreliable.

Wesbrook's sole use of zero-order correlations (Pearson's r's) to
demonstrate the empirical validity of his questionnaire is unconvincing.
Specifically, the procedure of reporting the intercorrelations of the dimensions
and subdimensions is inadequate because of the variety of other possible
relationships which could produce the reported correlations (pp. 175-176). Some
means of demonstrating discriminant validity from plausibly related concepts
should be provided. One worries whether, for example, need for social
desirability might be highly correlated with Wesbrook's scores. Some of these
methodological issues are made salient by his finding of a high correlation
between the indicators of morale, which are provided by the soldier respondents,
and similar high correlations between the ratings provided by the officer raters
(proficiency and discipline, pp. 177). On the other hand, when correlations are
run across the dimensions provided by the respondent as opposed to the officers,
the r's are low. This suggests the possibility of perceptual or response sets.

The actual administration of the questionnaire also raises some concerns.
In the published article, it is not reported whether Wesbrook presented himself
as a member of the Army or as a civilian. Moreover, it is conceivable that even
though the soldiers were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, the
request to put the last four digits of their social security number on the
questionnaire may have influenced their responses (pp. 173-174).

The reporting and discussion of the findings are also problematical.
Although Wesbrook's questionnaire consisted of 41 items, he only reports
collapsed percentages for eight items. This makes is difficult for the reader
to interpret the overall pattern and consistency of the results. (See Appendix

for critique of Wesbrook's selection of items and interpretations of responses.)
Moreover, when Wesbrook only uses the extreme respondents on the alienation
dimension, and "discards" approximately 70 percent of his sample, it is not
surprising that he obtains impressive correlations. When he calculates
correlations utilizing the extremes on both alienation and worst/best categories
of military efficiency, he is utilizing approximately 11 percent of the sample
(pp. 181). It is impossible to obtain an understanding of the strength of the
relationships with this selective discarding of data. Wesbrook reports that if
the entire range of the alienation dimension is considered, the average
correlation is -.182 (pp. 184). This means that the r^2 or variance accounted
for is only a little over 3 percent. From an applied policy perspective, the
strength of this relationship may be too weak.

A related point has to do with Wesbrook's "nonlinear" hypothesis about the
effects of alienation, i.e., that the relationships will be strongest at the
extremes (pp. 172-173). This strikes us an an odd use of the term "nonlinear"
inasmuch as this term usually refers to the shape of the relationship between
variables. What Wesbrook seems to be talking about is the strength of the
alienation/efficiency relationship. The relevant variable, alienation, is
postulated to be strongly predictive when it is either high or low but not when
its level is intermediate. To directly test this, he needs a measure of the
strength of the relationship at several levels of alienation. It is not
entirely convincing to argue that when you compare the strength of the relation-
ship using the entire range of variables and compare this to the strength of
relationship utilizing only extreme scores that the drop in the strength of
relationship when the entire range is used supports the "nonlinear" hypothesis.

Finally, even though, as Wesbrook argues, it is plausible that the high
level of diffuse alienation in the Army is due to the type of individuals who

enlist in the Army (e.g., p. 187), it is also possible that the Army experience is creating this general alienation through some type of generalization effect. The only way this question can be definitively answered is to collect pre-service scores on general alienation prior to respondents' entrance to the service and compare these to the "in-service" general and Army-specific scores. Cross sectional-based data such as the correlations between time in service and alienation are confounded by selective attrition and cohort effects.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON ALIENATION

The research summarized in this report raises many unanswered questions and provides numerous leads for further research on alienation. In this section, we report some of our thoughts and conclusions which were stimulated by our review of the relevant literature.

Discovery-Oriented Research on Alienation

Science has been defined as "action that aims at discovering truth and at bringing evidence that truth has been discovered (Wolman, 1965, p. 3)." Much that has been written about alienation may well be on target so far as discovering truth is concerned. The literature is rich in potential insights. "Bringing evidence to bear" is where the weakness lies. A good example of this two-criteria-of-science issue is Wesbrook's work. A combination of Wesbrook's personal experiences in the Army and extensive scholarly background (1979, 1980b) may well have enabled him to discover truth as discussed in his research article (1980a). It is at the point where he attempts to empirically document his thesis that his efforts, as have many others, run into some difficulties.

Action aimed at discovering truth can be of many types, including exploratory empirical forays. Although there is a current inability, because of fundamental problems of definition and measurement, to bring decisive evidence to bear on many of the propositions articulated in the literature on alienation, we do not wish to leave the impression that sociological and psychological studies of alienation are without value. Work which may seem, at the time, to have little scientific utility may, in the final analysis, be quite valuable. For instance, longitudinal analyses across population segments which are based on identical or highly similar questionnaire items whose meaning is subject to multiple interpretations may still possess substantial power. For example, Etzioni and Diprete's (1979) reanalysis of data from nationwide samples (1966-1976) which clearly indicate an across-the-board decline in reported confidence in institutions (e.g., the military, press, and banks) accompanied by an increase in an index of general disaffection (e.g., "I feel that what I think doesn't count much anymore") raises important issues for consideration by institutional policymakers. At the very least, they suggest that the impact of extra-institutional forces on institutional reputations are more important to consider today than they were fifteen years ago. The scientific challenge is, of course, to turn suggestions into substantiated propositions, to determine the wider meaning of such propositions, and to bring evidence to bear on issues of causality.

Measurement of Alienation

Three observtions will be made with regard to the measurement of alienation. First Wesbrook's (1980) questionnaire items should be cross-validated utilizing the same and additional external criteria so as to increase one's

confidence in the replicability and generality of his findings. Quite apart
from how we choose to label the 41 items (e.g., "sociopolitical alienation" or
"an ex-company commander's hunches about meaningful soldier attitudes"), the
fact is that Wesbrook obtained moderately high correlations between a paper-and-
pencil instrument and ratings of military efficiency by outside observers. If
the items stand up to cross-validation, then their utility in providing
incremental validity to existing measures should be explored.

Second, attempts to develop meaningful paper-and-pencil measures of
alienation should proceed. Although questionnaire items obtensibly measuring
alienation have been used in numerous studies, relatively little effort has been
devoted to developing construct valid measures of alienation which relate
uniquely to the concept.

Third, heretofore we have considered only simple paper-and-pencil measures
of alienation. It should be noted that there are other research responses to
the general question, "Who is today's soldier and how should she/he be treated
in order to maximize performance?" The technology exists to perform thorough
psychological assessments of individuals and to develop typologies which have
prognostic implications (McReynolds, 1968-1977; Holmes, 1972a, 1972b).[3] The
major difficulty for the Army as an institution in so describing individuals
involves the high costs.

Alienation as an Aspect of Research on Organizational Socialization

A still more comprehensive approach to research on alienation, which
includes consideration of personal competence/incompetence as suggested above,
might be to examine alienation simultaneously in two of its possible forms: as
a pre-existing individual difference or personal characteristic as emphasized

by Wesbrook (1980a) and as a reaction to experiences in the Army. In the paragraphs which follow, some of the considerations which might be involved in this approach are outlined.

The Army's concern with alienation stems from its desire to have highly committed, motivated soldiers who perform their institutional roles with a high degree of proficiency. Assuming that becoming a "good soldier" is an achievement having adaptive payoff in the Army, then becoming a "good soldier" is part of what is involved in developing personal competence in the Army, while becoming alienated (or returning to an alienated state) is part of what is involved in developing personal incompetence in the Army. Given that, initially, today's soldier is positively oriented to the Army (he experiences a sharp fall-off in attitude between the 5th and 8th months of service; Motowildo, Dunnette, and Rosse, 1980), it is reasonable to conceive of alienation with the Army as consistent with the following formulation (Stokol, 1975):

> The experience of alienation is conceptualized as a
> sequential-developmental process which (a) develops in the
> context of an ongoing relationship between an individual and
> another person or group of people (e.g., the Army) (b) involves an
> unexpected deterioration in the quality of outcomes provided to the
> individual by the other(s); and (c) persists to the extent that the
> individual and the other(s) remain spatially or psychologically proximal
> (p. 26).

The importance of Stokol's work in the present context is that it provides a conceptual framework for viewing the development of alienation in the Army. The empirical data suggest that alienation develops over the first 9-12 months following a soldier's entry, with the severity of the alienation being a function of various factors which increase the experience of disillusionment. The experience of disillusionment appears to be largely a product of the disconfirmation of expectations in the first unit of assignment (Stokol attempts to theoretically differentiate the experience of alienation from

other closely related experiences. His typology of estrangement experiences
includes four behavioral syndromes: isolation, reintegration, subjugation, and
rebellion.).

From the organization's viewpoint, the question is how to develop incoming
organizational members so that they will become effective members of the
organization. This is a primary research question investigated in the topical
area called "organizational socialization." Much research interest has been
stimulated by Schein's (1968) paper entitled "Organizational Socialization and
the Profession of Management." The fundamental questions addressed in
organizational socialization include "What are the stages of organizational
socialization?", "What factors determine movement from one stage to the next?",
and "What factors determine "irreversible" negative outcomes?" Several stage
models have been proposed by Feldman (1976a, 1976b; three-stage entry model);
Buchanan (1974; three-stage early career model); Porter-Lawler-Hackman (1975;
three stage entry model); Schein (1978; three stage socialization model); Wanous
(1980; four-stage socialization process); and Bourne (1967; four-stages of
socialization in basic training). Attempts to improve organizational
socialization outcomes have included using realistic job previews (Wanous, 1977)
and otherwise attempting to modify expectations (Meglino, Youngblood, Randolph,
Mobly, and DeNise, 1979).

The approach suggested, then, would involve longitudinal research aimed at
discovering socialization stages occurring in today's Army. A focus would be
understanding the determinants of movement from one stage to the next with
special attention being paid to developing an understanding of disillusionment
processes and ways of preventing or moderating stages of alienation. Lastly,
interactions with individual differences would be explored. If such
comprehensive research were conducted, the questions raised in this paper would
likely be answered.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The requirement for ease of measurement has restricted our inquiry to paper-and-pencil measures of alienation.

[2]The following quotes will give the reader a sampling of current perspectives in alienation measurement.

> Fourteen measures relating to the often abused term "alienation" are reviewed in Chapter 5. One of the main problems with the most widely-used instruments in this area is their failure to provide for any control over agreement response set. Nevertheless, the general correlates of alienation, or alternatively anomia, seem well-established: low social status, minority race, and general lack of social participation. While a number of sociologists have suggested that specific components of alienation (e.g., powerlessness, isolation) need to be distinguished, the empirical fruitfulness of such a division has not been amply demonstrated. In one of the most thorough investigations of attitude states in the literature, McClosky and Schaar find their Anomy Scale to be significantly related to an awesome array of psychological variables--life satisfaction, low self-esteem, inflexibility, pessimism, misanthropy, acquiescence, extreme political beliefs, and aggression. These findings tie in with the pattern of intercorrelations noted in Chapter 2, and further suggest a common syndrome potentially encompassing many of the constructs in this volume (Robinson & Shaver, 1973, p. 5).

> Sociologists, self-consciously striving to be 'social scientists', are anxious to develop objective criteria for the phenomena with which they are concerned. They therefore generally try to 'operationalize' their conceptions of alienation, and to develop ways of 'tapping' the feelings in question. The commonly accepted procedure for doing this is to devise lists of statements or questions which seem to them to express these feelings and which require nothing more of those tested than agreement or disagreement, or affirmative or negative answers (sometimes on a graded scale). A person is then considered alienated if and only if he makes the appropriate responses, or would do so if he were to respond to the test items. The issue here is not whether the tests employed by different writers are devised well or poorly, or whether the results obtained from their use are interpreted properly. What is significant is the fact that, because of the importance attached to the operationalization of the conceptions of alienation involved, and because of the way in which they are oprationalized, these conceptions in effect come to be construed in terms of the content of the test items employed.

> The question of whether or not various sociological conceptions of alienation can be operationalized is no real question at all. For these conceptions are operational in their very nature: The

types of alienation discussed are conceived operationally.
McClosky and Schaar are very candid on this point. They observe
that their 'anomy scale' is 'valid' because quite simply, 'the
(test) items define, by their content, our concept of anomy'.
(17, 24). The same is true, generally speaking for the
conceptions of alienation under consideration; although not all
of McClosky's and Schaar's colleagues are so clear and frank
about what they are doing.

The problem which looms so large in the case of Fromm, of
formulating clear criteria for the types of alienation he
discusses, is therefore no problem here. . . . (Schacht, 1970,
200-201).

The concept of alienation is characterized by considerable
confusion. That confusion includes definitional ambiguity,
varying frames of reference and referents, duplicative
operationalizations, and contradictory empirical findings (p.
115)....in the event, as with these data, that one is faced with
relatively little evidence of discriminant validity (between
work alienation and job satisfaction), the existing level of
knowledge is not sufficient to differentiate among the following
alternatives: (a) one is investigating, at the underlying
conceptual level, redundant or truly correlated constructs; (b)
the underlying constructs are conceptually independent, but our
operational measures of them are poor discriminators; or, (c)
the underlying constructs are independent and the measures
possess discriminant validity, but the traits in question are
correlated, at the empirical level for this sample at this time.
(Lefkowitz & Brigando, 1980, p. 129).

Confusion as to the theoretical and operational definitions and
to meanings of the concepts when employed to describe
characteristics of individuals from different populations has
surrounded much of this research (Knapp, p. 194, 1976).

...sociological approaches generally describe the state
alienation not in specific behavioral terms, but in terms of
epiphenomenal categories. As Johnson (1973) pointed out,
alienation is seen as 'an epiphenomenal abstraction,
collectively summarizing series of specific behaviors and
categorizing them as 'loneliness,' 'normlessness,' 'isolation,'
etc.' (p. 40). Such epiphenomenal descriptions of the concept
may have the flavor of intellectual romanticism, but have very
little scientific value because they pose problems of empirical
verification. The concept of alienation as an epiphenomenal
abstraction tends to carry excess meaning and therefore eludes
precise measurement. Besides, such an abstraction merely

describes alienation, it does not explain it (Kanungo, 1979,
p. 125).

If the above (review article titled "Alienation Studies")
represents a fair summary of the recent thrust of alienation
studies, it barely begins to reflect the thunder and volume of
debate. Much of that debate (e.g., the disagreement about the
early and late Marx) is not directly relevant here; but some of
it is of considerable importance, and among the more critical, I
would cite the following:

1. There are those who find the connection between the
classical notion of alienation and the empiricized versions
discussed here too tenuous...

2. The subjectivist cast of the bulk of the empirical work on
alienation draws considerable fire...

3. Alienation studies have remained entirely too dependent upon
what is basically the 'quick fix'--one-shot survey results, with
inadequate measures (one or two items is not rare), and with
aspirations that do not match the realized gain...These research
procedures also encourage a certain carelessness in naming
(hence thinking about) the constructs that are used in the broad
domain which includes alienation and its not easily
distinguishable cousins...Similar examples could be multiplied,
since sociologists have not worked very hard at demonstrating...
'convergent and discriminant validity.' (Seeman, pp. 114-115,
1975).

[3]Contemporary formulations of psychological assessment viewed

within systems perspectives have been provided by Sundberg, Snowden, and

Reynolds (1978) under the title "Toward Assessment of Personal

Competence and Incompetence in Life Situations." It should be noted

that assessment, in contrast to measurement, "aims at discerning

individual characteristics which are important for decisions in

person-society relationships (p. 179)." Underlying consideration of the

theory and practice of assessment, and consideration of alienation as an

aspect of organizational socialization, is "the need for a language or

terminology to describe individuals and their situations. Construct

systems are most helpful when they relate theory to specific measures for making

decisions about individuals (p. 180)." Decisions about individual soldiers,

within the context of organizational socialization, relate to selection,

training, and the choice (by NCOs) of a leadership approach more likely to

result in a favorable socialization outcome. Development, in turn, of theory to

underlie management of organizational socialization processes requires, in

addition to what is discussed in the remainder of this section, consideration of

psychological competence and incompetence in life situations:

> The notion of adaptation points to the need to assess both the
> motives of the person and the demands and resources of the environment.
> Competence suggests an ecological situation: individuals are actively
> moving through settings which provide "nutrients" or support for certain
> kinds of self-expression and require certain kinds of coping but hinder
> others. Self-direction and responsibility in coping with the
> environment include ability to define one's own criteria of success...
> questions (concern) the surroundings people will encounter and their
> coping resources and active interests (pp. 195-196).

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APPENDIX

Comments on Wesbrook's Selection of Items and Interpretations of Responses
Concerning Levels of Alienation Towards Society and Towards the Army

Wesbrook discusses the extent and sources of sociopolitical alienation
among soldiers (1980a; pp. 177-180). As noted in the text of the present
report, it is difficult for the reader to interpret the overall pattern and
consistency of findings because collapsed percentages were provided for only
eight of the 41, items. We have examined the total data set and concluded that
although Wesbrook's hypotheses on pages 177-180 are interesting, his data set
provides little in the way of support for his thesis.

As an example of the type of problem involved, Table 1 presents six items
for which responses were reported by Wesbrook, accompanied by responses to six
additional items. Wesbrook reported:

> The results of the survey of junior enlisted soldiers in combat
> arms units indicate that they currently have an extremely high
> level of alienation from society and from life in general. For
> example:
>
> --86% of the soldiers believe ("strongly agree" or "agree") that
>   most people will take advantage of them if given the chance, and
>   6% more are unsure.
>
> --51% feel that most people cannot be trusted and 19% are
>   uncertain.
>
> --47% believe that a person generally does not receive fair
>   treatment under the law and 19% are unsure.
>
> --54% believe that "luck and who you know" matter more in life in
>   getting ahead than merit or hard work, and 15% are unsure.
>
> --54% think that ideas change so fast that there is nothing to depend
>   on, and 25% are unsure;
>
> --34% believe that there are no right or wrong ways to make money,
>   only easy and hard ways, and 10% are uncertain.

Inclusion of the six items in Table 1 in addition to those reported by Wesbrook alters the picture depicted. For example, examine the two items in Set 2. Compare Wesbrook's report that "47% believe that a person generally does not receive fair treatment under the law, and 19% are unsure" with the statement that "55% believe that a person most often will receive justice through the law, while 23% are unsure." Three comments are in order: First, the direction of wording of the questionnaire items in Table 1 can be observed to have made a difference in responses (which is why recommended practice is to balance direction of wording across items and compute an average score); second, in the absence of norms or adequate comparison groups, one is hard-pressed to attribute meaning to individual means of the type used by Wesbrook, and third, in the absence of construct-validated measures, it is difficult to adequately interpret responses.

Table 1

Questions   Description of Response

Questions	Alienated	Uncertain	Non-Alienated
Set 1			
*Most people will take advantage of you if they get the chance.	86%	6%	9%
*Most people cannot be trusted.	51%	19%	30%
Most people are inclined to help others.	27%	19%	54%
Set 2			
*People generally do not receive fair treatment under the law.	47%	19%	35%
Most often a person will receive justice through the law.	22%	23%	55%
Set 3			
*Luck and who you know matters more in getting a promotion or a better job in most cases than how hard you work or how good a job you do.	54%	15%	32%
*If two people with the same seniority are considered for a promotion, the one who most often has done the job best will usually get it.	29%	8%	63%
The more a person knows about his job, the better are his chances of being promoted.	14%	6%	80%
Set 4			
*People's ideas change so much that I wonder if we'll ever have anything to depend on	54%	27%	19%
*Everything is relative, and there just aren't any definite rules to live by.	33%	22%	45%
Set 5			
*There are no right or wrong ways to make money, only easy and hard ways.	34%	10%	57%
If you found someone else's wallet with money in it, then you would have a moral obligation to try to find the owner and return the money and the wallet.	14%	16%	71%

NOTES:

1. Questions worded in an alienated direction, i.e., marking "strongly agree" or "agree" is scored alienated, are indicated by an asterisk.